Country Album Reviews

ATLANTA — Atlanta — MDJ/MCA-5576 — Producers: David Hungate, Jimmy Bowen

The nine-member group returns on its second album with a complete package of uptempo tunes, ballads and even a gospel-flavored number. The instrumentation/vocal mix is carefully crafted to showcase each without distracting from the songs. Using several different lead vocalists throughout the album, Atlanta offers the listener a multi-faceted sound that other acts simply cannot compete with. The material here is fresh and varied, and consumers should be pleasantly surprised at the development of the group since last year's top five effort. Look for this one to breakout quickly at the retail level.

TRYIN' TO OUTRUN THE WIND — John Schneider — MCA-5583 — Producers: Jimmy Bowen, John Schneider

This is not just some Hollywood-meets-Nashville record. There have been a number of singers who have broken recently and achieved some degree of success at the cash register and on radio who are really country in name only. That's not the case this time. Country fits John Schneider well. Assembled here is an unpretentious collection of songs which provide the fuel for Schneider to vocally run the emotional gamut of lovin', losin', and honky tonkin' without being mushy, suicideal, or incarcerated. If anybody asks, tell them John Schneider is a country singer.

RESTLESS HEART — Restless Heart — RCA CPL1-5369 — Producers: Tim DuBois, Scott Hendricks, Restless Heart

This is the best debut album we've heard this year. On first listening, as with any new group, the impulse to compare is irresistable: the vocal harmony is reminiscent of the Eagles (except that Larry Stewart's lead for Restless Heart is better than any Eagle voice ever was), and the playing brings to mind groups that are known for their musicianship ("Heartbreak Kid" sounds like a Toto cut). The rock edge to several tunes on this LP will appeal mainly to younger buyers, but Restless Heart is positively based in country in the sense that the songs are as much a part of the album's strength as is any other element. The Wood Newton/Michael Noble song, "I Want Everyone To Cry," could become a standard.

FEATURE PICKS

GREATEST HITS — Lee Greenwood — MCA-5582 — Producer: Jerry Crutchfield

This "MCA Hits" package contains nine of Greenwood's hits including "I.O.U.," "Going, Going, Gone" and "Somebody's Gonna Love You," along with his current single "Dixie Road" which debuts this week at 73 bullet. Sure to sell.

HIS BEST — Merle Haggard — MCA 5573 — Producers: Jimmy Bowen, Hank Cochran, Fuzzy Owen, Porter Wagoner, Merle Haggard

A collection of some of Haggard's best tunes from the late 1970s and early 1980s, this album showcases the country giant in his best form as the master of stories in song.

GREATEST HITS — Gene Watson — MCA-5572 — Producers: Russ Reeder, Gene Watson

Eighteen different songwriters contributed to this slice of Gene Watson's success and that is a tribute to the artist's interpretive power. Included are the top 10 hits "This Dream's On Me," "Speak Softly," and the 1981 number one, "Fourteen Carat Mind."

STILL HUNG UP ON YOU — Bill Medley — RCA CPL1-5352 — Producer: Jerry Crutchfield

A lot of love songs sung by an artist whose voice should never have been absent from the recording arena. Thank goodness and RCA, he's back. This eight-song collection includes yet another great Bob McDill composition, "Women In Love," and a song recalling Medley's gritty former days, "Stand Up."

COUNTRY COLUMN

OAKS ON THE RIVIERA — The Oak Ridge Boys have been scheduled to participate in the grand opening series of performances for The Acropolis, a new convention and exhibition center in Nice, France. The Oaks will play the new facility on May 14, joining a list of international stars such as **Placido Domingo** and **Charles Aznavour** in the Acropolis' 47-day opening celebrations, which also include an international space and aeronautical festival, an exhibition by former Olympic teams, performances by the Nice Philharmonic Orchestra, various art exhibits and many theatre and film presentations. The quartet has decided to donate their performance fee for the event to Feed The Children, an international nonprofit organization presently helping to feed refugees, orphans and displaced persons in 11 countries. The funds donated by the Oaks will be used to drill four badly needed water wells, one named for each member of the group, in the Rift Valley of Kenya. The Oak Ridge Boys have been involved in benefit work for some time — they have participated in the campaign to prevent child abuse in America for over five years and were recently named Honorary Chairmen of the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse. Speaking for the group, Oak Ridge Boy **Joe Bonsall** said, "We're honored to be a part of this terrific international event. But we're doubly excited about the performance in Nice because it gives us a bonus in the form of helping people in Africa." Jim Halsey, who manages the group and is the chairman and CEO of the Jim Halsey Co., the Oaks' booking agency, is said to be negotiating worldwide radio and television broadcast rights for the group's Nice performance.

***WAYLON AND THE VEEPS** — RCA execs John Ford (left), division vp/RCA Records, USA and Canada; and Joe Galante (right), division vp/RCA Records, Nashville, met with Waylon Jennings (center) following Waylon's recent three-night stand at NYC's Radio City Music Hall with Johnny Cash.*

HANK'S HITTIN' FIFTY — That's number of career albums, not age! The release of **Hank Williams, Jr.**'s "Five-O" LP, with a street date of April 29, has gotten the people at Warner Bros. really excited. Said senior marketing VP **Vic Faraci**, "Wait 'til you see what we do . . . That's going to be his biggest album . . . initial response from dealers from playing the pre-release cassettes has been absolutely overwhelming." Warner Bros. national sales coordinator for country **Neal Spielberg** noted that the new album brings the number of Hank's LPs on the label to 13; the last two, "Man Of Steel" and "Major Moves," are gold albums, and the "Greatest Hits" package has gone platinum. Spielberg said, "Obviously part of the marketing campaign (for the new record) . . . is 'Here's one of the strongest artists in the country music field, and he's got another major milestone in his career' . . . We'll be listing his strong catalog . . . We're doing some national ads with some of our major customers like K-Mart and Target." Spielberg also said that "Five-O" will get a push from Warner Bros.' "awareness and visibility" campaign, in which a featured record is discounted at Licorice Pizza in Los Angeles, Sound Warehouse in Dallas and Turtles in Atlanta, combined with radio station tie-ins in those cities during the campaign. Spielberg indicated that the campaign is producing notable results, saying, "Licorice Pizza in Los Angeles was the first to come back with figures, and in the first month of the promotion their catalog product . . . is up 15 percent to 20 percent in country; their hit product . . . is up 50 percent. So the promotion is working." Spielberg also noted that several other labels are beginning to follow promotional plans similar to the Warner Bros. scheme.

COUNTRY BOY GETS ZAPPED — The video of **Ricky Skaggs'** *Country Boy* will be shown in selected movie theatres across the country beginning this month. The "Music ZAP" feature, a coordinated project of CBS Records and the New York-based music video promotion firm, Music Motions, will be matched with films that are aimed at similar demographics. *Country Boy* is the first country video promotion done by Music Motions, which has worked in the past with videos by artists such as **Jermaine Jackson, Kool & The Gang**, and **Barbra Streisand**. The promotion will begin in Nashville and New York and will eventually reach all 1,000 theatres on Music Motions' list of affiliates . . . Skaggs, by the way, has just completed production and recording of a national TV spot for the March of Dimes, which features actor **Richard Dreyfuss**. There is little rest in store for the Epic artist — he embarks on a trip to Europe in May which will include taping for a live album at London's Dominion Hall.

HAT HOSTS — The Academy of Country Music has announced that **Glen Campbell, Loretta Lynn** and **Janie Fricke** will host its 20th annual awards special May 6 on NBC television from 9-11 p.m. (EST). All three hosts are past winners of ACM "Hat" awards.

FLOUNCING TO THE TOP — Moe Bandy and **Joe Stampley** won the top award in the country category of the recent American Video Awards show with their *Where's The Dress?* **Boy George** parody. The award was the second for the video; it won a silver medal for excellence at the International Film and TV Festival of New York late last year. Executive producer of the clip **Jim Owens** said, "The recognition of this video . . . is a clear indication that Nashville is fully capable of producing quality music videos." It also shows what pink pumps and a little make up can do for guys like Moe and Joe.

bill fisher

New CRB Officers Elected

NASHVILLE — The board of directors of the Country Radio Broadcasters, meeting on March 10 following the organization's annual seminar, elected new officers for the year. The new CRB president is Mike Oatman of Great Empire Broadcasting, Wichita, KS; Joe Casey, CBS Records, Nashville, was elected vice-president; the group's new secretary is Tom Phifer of KRMD, Shreveport, and returning as treasurer is Jeff Walker, president of Aristo Music Associates, Nashville.